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Pelham NEWS

A cross country journey

BOB TYMCZYSZYN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Kate Knafelc from E.L. Crossley Secondary School runs on the junior girls team during the Zone 3/4 SOSSA cross country meet at Fireman's Park in Niagara Falls last Tuesday.

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MARYANNE FIRTH/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Niagara's inter-municipal transit working group is proposing a consolidated model for the region's future. Group members, including Welland Mayor Frank Campion, Regional Chairman Alan Caslin, St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sendzik and Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati, gathered for a media briefing Thursday.

Transit consolidation put in gear

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Niagara is steering toward a consolidated transit system.

The inter-municipal transit working group tasked with determining the future of busing in the region has decided a model that amalgamates the St. Catharines, Welland and Niagara Falls systems is the direction it wants to head.

The group, which includes the mayors and CAOs of the three communities, as well as the regional chairman and acting CAO, were presenting the option to the three city councils at the beginning of the week and will be presenting to the public next month for feedback before a final report is completed and recommendation made.

"This is that critical juncture in the road, fork in the road in terms of where we go," working group chairman and St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sendzik said Last Thursday during a media briefing updating the issue.

It's an opportunity to discuss the proposed path to determine whether local councils and transit users feel it's a right fit for Niagara, he said.

Consultants were brought on board to help review Niagara's existing transit operations and potential governance models. Those models include the status quo of three separate systems running local transit, with Niagara Region responsible for inter-municipal routes; a consolidated model to create a single system delivering local and inter-municipal transit; and a regional model with both local and inter-municipal transit delivered and paid for by the Region.

Under the recommended consolidated model, St. Catharines, Welland and Niagara Falls would continue to fund local transit and the Region would still fund the inter-municipal connections beyond the consolidated area, said Welland CAO Gary Long.

The system would be governed by a single independent entity.

Communities outside of the three large urban centre would be responsible for their own local transit in order to link to the inter-municipal connections. The cost of a consolidated system is still being determined. The financials are expected to be released in the near future.

Long said the proposal would see a new public corporation established, with the assets of the three transit properties being transferred to that new entity.

Creation of a municipal advisory board has also been recommended.

The working group has been meeting with stakeholders, including businesses, students, health-care and social service providers, and transit users to determine what Niagara's busing needs are.

"One of the first things we found is we have to extend our hours," said Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati, adding people need to be able to get to work and school in the morning and home at the end of the day.

Fares, he said, also need to be "reasonably priced" to ensure the service will be well used.

Continued on Page 12

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Redesign may be needed for St. Catharines cop shop

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

A redesign may be in store for the new St. Catharines police detachment to prevent $5.65 million in projected cost overruns.

That was the direction several regional councillors said they'd like to see the project take in order to rein in costs.

The to-be-built detachment and its price tag were a hot topic at last Wednesday's corporate services committee meeting, where an update on its status was provided by staff.

Some councillors previously raised concerns over the new police facilities, including the combined Niagara Regional Police headquarters and Niagara Falls detachment, as well as the St. Catharines detachment, climbing past an $83-million funding cap previously put in place.

The projected cost overrun was brought forward to the police services board by regional staff two weeks ago.

While a funding cap was established for the related builds, no budget was set specifically for the St. Catharines detachment, said Mo Lewis, Niagara Region's acting chief administrative officer.

However, a stipulation was put in place that once the new headquarters was completed, no less than $10 million of that $83 million should remain for the St. Catharines facility, he said.

Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn disagreed no budget for the detachment existed, calling the forecasted increase "outrageous" and "unacceptable."

"This is what happens when you don't have a budget, or you don't think there's a budget. You put everything in," he said of the design. "It's called kitchen sink building. You put absolutely everything in."

The St. Catharines building, to also house a contentious 911 backup centre, is now projected to cost $23.8 million, despite about $18.2 million in available funding.

The police services board has allocated $1 million toward the 911 backup centre, now estimated to cost $2.6 million.

The board will have to determine if it will contribute additional funds to that component of the build, Lewis said.

After a decision is made at the board level, council can determine how to proceed, he added.

Lewis said staff are trying to give council early warning that "financial pressures" exist with the detachment's construction.

The estimated cost of the project began to climb as the detailed design came together.

"I think this needs to be sent back, redesigned, right-sized," Augustyn said of the detachment, to be built in the area of Welland Avenue and Niagara Street. "Maybe that 911 backup centre can go somewhere else and we can use that $1 million wisely in another facility. There are bound to be other options."

He feared the St. Catharines building is poised to "eat up" the savings seen in the headquarters construction.

The headquarters' tender came in $6 million under budget, money that is available to help fund the St. Catharines build, Niagara Region project manager Mislav Koren said.

There is also $500,000 remaining from the headquarters' $4.5-million contingency that can also be used for the new construction, he said.

St. Catharines Coun. Andy Petrowski felt the reports being received on the detachment were premature, as projected costs may differ significantly from the tender bids that are ultimately received.

"Let's go to tender. Let's get the actual dollar value and then let's have the actual dust-up on this, which it sounds like there's going to be," he said.

> **"This is what happens when you don't have a budget, or you don't think there's a budget. You put everything in. It's called kitchen sink building. You put absolutely everything in."**
>
> Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn

The construction tender is expected to be issued in early 2017.

Niagara Falls Coun. Selina Volpatti came looking for answers regarding the property selected for the Garden City station.

Though appraised at $960,000, the land ended up costing more than $3.2 million — $1.35 million for its purchase and $1.86 million for its remediation.

"I want to know how we got here," she asked staff.

See BUDGET page 17

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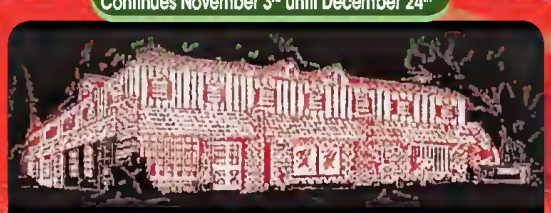

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East Fonthill progress update

DAVE AUGUSTYN

To help answer some recent community questions, here's some of what I spoke about during a State of the Town address to the Chamber of Commerce in early-October.

Added in 2000, Developing Now:

When it added 450 acres to the town's eastern urban boundary in 2000, the Ontario Municipal Board guaranteed huge growth for Pelham. What wasn't certain was the type of that growth. That's why council and I worked so hard over the last decade to ensure that these East Fonthill lands integrate with the existing community, protect sensitive environmental elements, benefit existing residents by including public facilities and commercial amenities, and require attractive and pedestrian/cycle-friendly form.

To help achieve this vision, council approved a secondary plan for all of East Fonthill and a Site Master Plan for the 54 acres of town, and privately-owned lands fronting Regional Road 20. These award-winning plans allow various uses including medical, retail, retirement, community centre, mixed-use commercial, townhomes, mixed-use residential, parks and trails.

Commercial Development:

As you know, the commercial component is taking shape along Regional Road 20. While most stores will likely open in early-2017, the Food Basics is scheduled for next month and the Tim Horton's in late-December. The buildings are purposefully closer to the road to help encourage walkability and slow vehicle traffic.

Medical Centre & Retirement Home:

In 2014, the town approved an agreement to sell 7.7 acres of land to the Allen Group to construct a medical centre and a retirement home. The about 30,000 square foot medical centre should include five to 10 family doctors, a mini-pharmacy, and other health and wellness and allied professionals. When the province disallowed new family health teams for Niagara for nearly a year, establishing the centre got slightly delayed to 2017. The 130-unit senior's campus should offer independent and assisted living options and is hoped to break ground in 2018.

Surplus Lands:

In September, council reaffirmed our priority of selling surplus lands at a maximum dollar value and for the best community use. We also developed a draft lay-out for the property. You will recall that we expect to generate an average of $600,000 per acre to help fund the community centre's construction.

Piazza/Public Square:

The Site Master Plan envisions a large, public square next to the future community centre that would include interlocking brick, an outdoor theatre, a water feature, and trees and benches. While contemplated a few years from now, Council applied in June for Canada Cultural Spaces Funding to cover 50 per cent of the estimated $5.1 million project; we have yet to hear the results of that application.

Please contact Mayor Dave at mayordave@pelham.ca with questions or ideas for future columns. Please read past columns at www.pelhammayordave.blogspot.com.

Culinary students take to world stage

CRAIG YOUDALE

Have you thought about what is next in food innovation? What are the next trends coming at your favourite restaurant? What is going to be the next Pho or Taco revolution? Look no further than the Culinary Olympics going on in Germany this week. Our very own Niagara College is here on the world stage representing Canada, in the Junior/Student level of the competition, against 19 other countries. Today they are up against the likes of Italy, Denmark and Germany for culinary supremacy in the student world. They will compete on two separate days for Olympic Gold with all countries vying to be crowned Olympic Champion and four years of bragging rights.

It is here we see what the world is cooking and what exciting new techniques and preparation methods will dominate the Michelin Star tables of the future. Over 2,000 chefs are gathered here in Erfurt, Germany to battle for medals in many categories of teams and individuals. I have been to four different Olympic events, three of them as manager of Culinary Team Canada's junior team, and it continues to amaze me where food is going and what is next for our students to learn and absorb for the future.

Column continued on Page 6

LUKE GILLETT / SPECIAL TO POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Culinary team member Daniella Germond.

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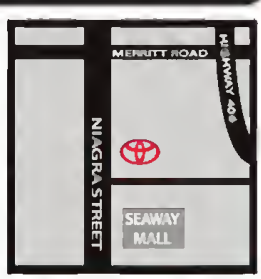

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LOCALNEWS

National culinary team incorporates diverse Canadian flavours

FROM PAGE 4

The pressure of this competition is palpable and visceral in a way that is hard to describe. Many pacing mentors and coaches watching through plexi-glass kitchens in hopes their team pulls off a culinary miracle and come out on top. I am thinking that this looks more like a maternity ward with anxious dads as opposed to coaches and visitors to the event. There is no reason to think this is by chance because these teams put in thousands of hours of work leading to these few days in the fall to put their talents on the line every four years.

This is where we first saw Scandinavia show us their foraging and preserving style of cuisine that has become a dominant force in the top restaurants in the world. We see the technical aspects of molecular cuisine become a normal day in the kitchen, as well we see what equipment and innovation science has provided our budding and experienced white robed warriors. On top of all this technique is the ultimate in support of national ingredients that is illustrated perfectly in our own National Junior Team. The menu consists of Nova Scotia lobster, Atlantic salmon, Alberta beef, Cranberry, blueberry, maple and so many more aspects of Canadian-ingredient based cuisine.

I recommend taking a moment and watching online, or through social media, as our local Niagara College team from The Canadian Food and Wine Institute takes the culinary stage and becomes a part of that future that this event so boldly displays. They can be reached at www.ncjrculinaryteamcanada.ca where you can link to the social feeds and keep up with the daily blogs and videos. The next time you try that special restaurant or even try out a new style of cooking at home remember it most likely hit the plates of the Culinary Olympics as some point in the past.

Craig Youdale has been in the Food and Beverage industry for three decades as a chef, restauranteur, professor, international competitor and now Dean of the Canadian Food and Wine Institute at Niagara College. His passion for all things food and wine has led him to Niagara to lead the Institute to become the world's foremost educator in Fermentation Sciences and Culinary Arts.

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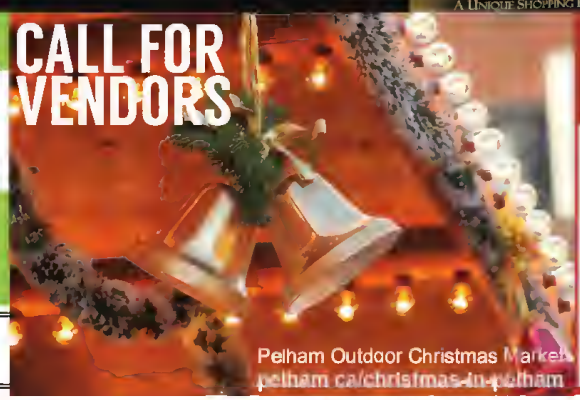

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Food Basics bags sign approval for Pelham store

WAYNE CAMPBELL
Special to Postmedia Network

For Food Basics, third time was a charm.

Last Monday night Pelham town council approved signage for the new grocery store on Regional Road 20 after twice rejecting designs that did not conform to the municipality's sign bylaw.

Food Basics designs included a sign four times the size allowed and a storewide slogan called overkill.

"Shame on us," said Wayne Williams of the Metro grocery cbain, owners of Food Basics.

He told council the signs are part of the store's brand, but the company did not check the town's sign bylaw.

In its latest application, it removed its "Always more for less" slogan from a banner across the front of the store and reduced the Food Basics sign to about the limit allowed by the town.

Williams said he surveyed other signs across the town.

Sobeys — the only large grocery store now in Pelham — he estimated at just at the town's limit, while the Beer Store, LCBO and Sboppers Drug Mart fit in with the standard designs of those stores.

"We want to make ours appropriate," Williams said.

Council voted to approve a new sign design.

Ward 2 Coun. Gary Accursi said it will blend in with the community and called it a compromise by both sides.

"We give a little and you give a lot," he quipped.

Williams said the Pelham sign bylaw was designed for small businesses in a downtown area.

He suggested council may want to review it in light of larger box stores that may come into the new east Fonthill development.

Williams praised the co-operation he received.

"It made us a better retailer working so closely with town staff," he said.

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Transit consolidation put in gear

From Page 2

Efforts are underway to develop an integrated electronic fare payment system, as well as a trip planning system, to make using transit across Niagara easier and more convenient. Work is also being done to remove any duplication of routes from existing transit systems in order to maximize services.

"As we integrate them, we're trying to limit travel times and limit the need to wait for connections," Diodati said.

Finding efficiencies and eliminating duplicate services means potential to put more dollars toward adding routes and extending service times, he said. Some recommendations realized along the way have been acted upon immediately, such as need for service at the new Outlet Collection at Niagara and improvements to the GO bus connection at Fairview Mall.

In addition to moving residents around Niagara, inter-municipal transit will also act as a critical connection to GO transit service, set to arrive in Grimsby in 2021.

The Region's existing inter-municipal pilot project ends in May 2017.

A new model is expected to take its place at that time, but must first be approved by local and regional councils. The working group also wants to first year from the public.

Consultation meetings will take place next month. Dates and locations have yet to be finalized.

An online survey is also expected to be launched at that time.

"We want people who are going to be using the system and paying for the system to have a say in how the system's going to operate," Welland Mayor Frank Campion said. "It's particularly important for us to understand what the user expectation is."

Once feedback is compiled, it will be brought back to the working group and consultants and will "formulate part of how we move forward," Campion said.

More financial details and more information on the structure of the proposed new system will be rolled out after public and council input is collected, Sendzik said.

The hope is to have a decision by the three local councils and regional council before the end of January, he said.

"While it seems like it could be an interim report, we're on the five-yard line. We're close to getting it to the one-yard line and that's where the final report will get us."

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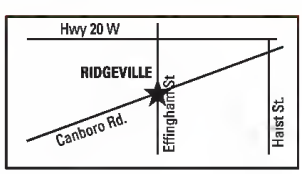

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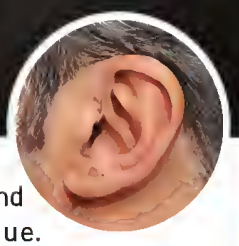

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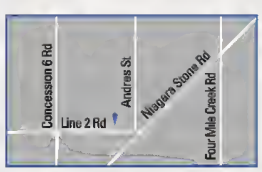

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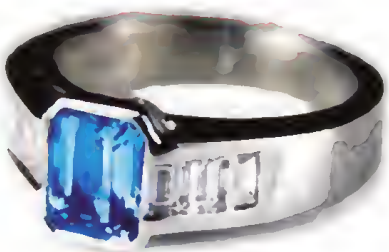

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IN BRIEF

Motion requests Hwy. 20 sidewalk safety measures

Town Couns. Gary Accursi and Marvin Junkin will present a notice of motion asking Niagara Region to take measures to ensure the safety of pedestrians using sidewalks adjacent to Regional Road 20.

The pair at a previous council meeting voted against extending a sidewalk along the highway from Fonthill to E.L. Crossley Secondary School.

In introducing their motion, Accursi (Ward 2) called the decision "active transportation gone wild."

In promoting it "nothing was done to address speeding traffic down Highway 20."

Junkin (Ward 1) said he wanted "to make the whole thing more sensible."

Pelham noise bylaw needs more chatter

In an unusual move, Pelham town council introduced first reading of a revised noise bylaw but held back on second and third readings last Monday night.

Mayor Dave Augustyn said some clarification was still necessary about what is included and what is not.

"Would it apply to music from a bar in a commercial area but near a residential area?" he asked.

Fire Chief Bob Lymburner said it "applied to electronically enhanced music" that was creating "a nuisance noise."

Permits, however, would allow for festivals, concerts and other gatherings, he said.

The bylaw covers the whole town of Pelham and not just its urban areas of Fonthill and Fenwick, said Lymburner.

Second and third readings of the noise bylaw will come at a future council meeting.

The councillors are suggesting a school zone or community safety zone through Fonthill from the high school in the west to Rice Road in the east "or such other measures that the Region deems appropriate."

Love My Hood, a plan for better neighbourhoods

A staff committee suggests Pelham town council put $3,466 in its 2017 budget for a Love My Hood strategy.

It would encourage neighbourhood events by providing supplies, tips and guidelines.

Events — such as walking groups, ball hockey games, tree plantings and block parties — would allow residents to meet socially and come together to develop their neighbourhoods.

The strategy would help "ensure community pride, safety and strengthened sense of belonging," interdepartmental staff told town council last Monday.

While residents would organize events, a tool kit could include materials for games or cleanups, tips for activities, and one-stop service for road closing and notice requirements.

Town council put strengthening neighbourhoods into its recent strategic plan.

Staff said Burlington and Waterloo Region have successful programs similar to Love Your Hood.

The town creates interdepartmental committees for special projects.

Love My Hood committee members are: Mark Paniccia, Mark Lovell, Jodi Hendriks, Jordan Mammoliti, Julie Hannah and Victoria Bagshaw.

Group promotes emergency readiness

A Pelham staff group is spreading the word about the need for emergency preparedness.

In a presentation to town council last Monday, it reviewed the creation of a 72-hour emergency preparedness guide.

It outlines how to select food, water, flashlights, radios, blankets and other supplies to survive during a storm, flood, blackout or other emergency while waiting for help to arrive.

Three days is a typical down period in an emergency.

The tips are drawn from similar guides collected from other municipalities.

Over the past few months, the emergency booklet has been available at town hall, Pelham library branches and the arena. They were handed out at the Thursday suppermarket, Summerfest and Kinsmen's home show.

New resident packages include the guide.

Tips from it are used in arena and town hall TV advertising as well as on the town's website. Soon tips will appear in construction notices to residents about work on their streets and in water and tax bills.

For forecasted storm events, a member of the staff will be available to advise residents.

Soon they will distribute the emergency preparedness information to Pelham seniors' buildings.

— Wayne Campbell, Special to Postmedia Network

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Regional councillors to put reigns on spending

BUDGET from page 3

"The decision to purchase this property was specifically directed by regional council," Lewis said in response. Council at that time, he said, was made aware of the appraised value, the vendor's purchase price and that remediation would be required at the property.

PETROWSKI

"Staff received clear direction from council to act, purchase this property and move forward with the cleanup. That's how we got here."

Thorold Coun. Henry D'Angela, former police board chairman, said council "wrote a blank cheque for the cleanup" on the land in 2014.

"It was not the ideal property," he said, adding he believes "that's where the bulk of this overage is now stemming from."

A detailed report outlining the history of the project will be brought to committee Nov. 9 for discussion.

A second report, including staff recommendations on financial options moving forward and budget implications, will come to council Nov. 17.

Volpatti hoped those reports would also address rumours she's heard that police are "very dissatisfied" with the amount of parking proposed for the St. Catharines site.

"Do we have enough parking or not? Are we going to have to buy more property so we can have more parking? What's the reality of the situation here?" she questioned.

Lewis said it's his understanding that the police force is satisfied with the 155 parking spaces earmarked for the property.

"As it stands now, I'm not aware of any requests for additional parking."

If parking was later deemed insufficient, additional land would have to be purchased or rented, Lewis said.

If it's believed parking may come up short of the need, the facility should be redesigned prior to construction to address that issue, Augustyn said.

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IN BRIEF

Survey promotes benefits of trees

Darren Platakis, executive director of Geospatial Niagara, invited Pelham to join Tree Code Niagara, a crowd-sourcing data project of Niagara's urban tree inventory.

The project promotes economic benefits of trees by detailing the dollar value from energy conservation, storm water filtering, carbon dioxide removal and oxygen generation.

So far the project has collected information about trees in St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Its only Pelham tree in the inventory is a northern red oak at 548 Memorial Dr.

Platakis said this was his first presentation to a municipality outside St. Catharines but hopes to draw in the whole region.

The project ties in with Brock University, Innovate Niagara, iHub, Royal Canadian Geographical Society, Urban Forest Stewardship Network and Science Citizen.org.

It promotes the benefits of trees as well as tree-related careers for students.

Ian Lucas, a Pelham resident with the group, said once completed the inventory data could help a municipality track gaps in tree canopy as well as diseases affecting trees.

The new East Fonthill development, he said, will change runoff water patterns. Tree Code Niagara data could help the town make informed decisions.

Town council supports certified crop advisers

Pelham town council supported a City of Belleville resolution opposing a provincial government move to replace 538 certified crop advisers with 80 professional pest advisers.

The resolution calls for protecting the right of farmers to choose their advisers.

Ward 1 Coun. Marvin Junkin said the 538 certified crop advisers, although paid by a pesticide manufacturer, are reliable with years of experience and partners with farmers.

He called the planned move just a way to eliminate of jobs by the Liberal government.

Ward 1 Coun. Richard Rybiak voted against a council resolution saying there was "a built in conflict of interest" with the advisers being paid by the pesticide makers.

— Wayne Campbell, Special to Postmedia Network

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Do you know someone who is involved in worthwhile community service, is contributing while living with a limitation, has performed an heroic act, demonstrates individual excellence, or is going above and beyond to help others? If so, nominate them today!

Nominations are open until November 30, and nomination forms are available from this newspaper, and the Ontario Community Newspapers Association at www.ocna.org or 416-923-7724 ext. 4439.

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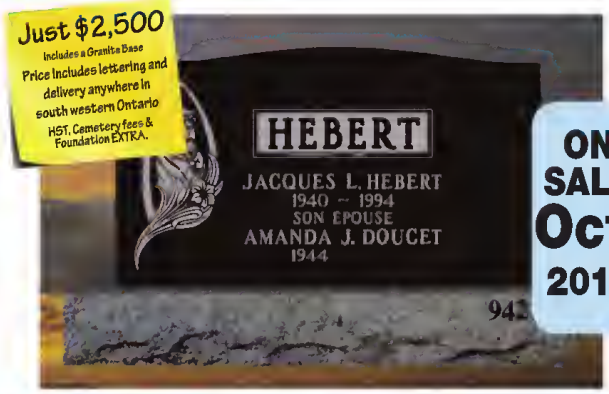

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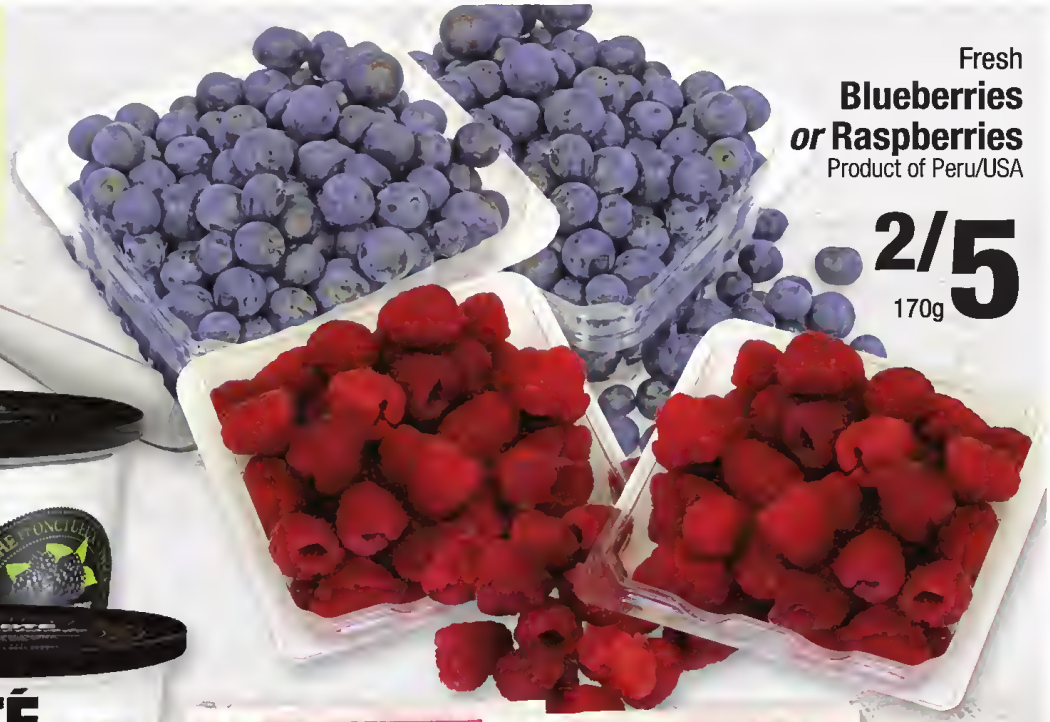

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